

Essential Elements of Service Learning Practice

Essential Elements

Description

Cluster 1: Learning

Element 1

Effective service learning establishes clear educational goals that require the application of concepts, content and skills from the academic disciplines and involves students in the construction of their own knowledge.

Checklist 3, 4, and 12

Element 2

In effective service learning, students are engaged in tasks that challenge and stretch them cognitively and developmentally.

Suggested service activities

Element 3

In effective service learning, assessment is used as a way to enhance student learning as well as to document and evaluate how well students have met content and skills standards.

Checklist 1, 11, 13

Cluster II: Service

Element 4

Students are engaged in service tasks that have clear goals, meet genuine needs in the school or community and have significant consequences for themselves and others

Suggested service activities

Element 5

Effective service learning employs formative and summative evaluation in a systematic evaluation of the service effort and its outcomes

Checklist 1, 9, 11

Cluster III: Critical Components that Support Learning & Service

Element 6

Effective service learning seeks to maximize student voice in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating the service project.

Checklist 6, 7, 9

Element 7 Effective service learning values diversity through its participants, its practice and its outcomes.

JROTC program elements value diversity

Element 8 Effective service learning promotes communication and interaction with the community and encourages partnerships and collaboration.

JROTC program elements, Checklist 15

Element 9 Students are prepared for all aspects of their service work including a clear understanding of task and role, the skills and information required by the task, awareness of safety precautions, as well as knowledge about and sensitivity to the people with whom they will be working.

Checklist 4, 6

Element 10 Student reflection takes place before, during and after service, uses multiple methods that encourage critical thinking, and is a central force in the design and fulfillment of curricular objectives.

Checklist 2, 5, 8

Element 11 Multiple methods are designed to acknowledge, celebrate and further validate students' service work.

Checklist 9, 10

Does service-learning work?

Service-learning is an idea that simply makes sense to many educators and community members. Anecdotal evidence points strongly to the value of service-learning efforts (several stories are collected in *Service-Learning in Action: Voices From the Field*, Education Commission of the States, 1999). But is there research to back it up? The research on service-learning (Brandeis, 1998; Hedin and Conrad, 1990) shows that students who take part in service-learning strengthen their academic and citizenship skills and their civic attitudes. In addition, there is evidence that service-learning provides the key experiences that lead to resiliency (Sagor, 1996) and help develop a sense of social responsibility (Berman, 1997).